COURSE OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

This doctoral level strategy seminar is an introductory level course for Ph.D. students who expect to conduct research in strategic management or related areas (e.g. international business, organization theory, sociology of organizations, industrial organization, entrepreneurship, marketing strategy, supply chain management, corporate finance, etc.). The seminar involves a critical review of a wide variety of theoretical approaches to strategy research that are based on different disciplines such as economics and sociology.

In studying this topic, we will also focus on the process of conducting strategy research. What is the anatomy of a scholarly contribution and how does one conduct research in this field? What are some of the challenges of conducting research in the field of strategic management? The students will be exposed to the process of conducting research as they discuss and analyze the readings.

Learning Objectives

The primary overarching goal is to help doctoral students become independent scholars who are knowledgeable in the field of strategic management. More specifically, the objectives of this course are to help students to:

- develop a knowledge and understanding of the major theories, issues and contributions in the field of strategic management;
- summarize, integrate, and evaluate research in strategic management;
- develop new ideas and/or approaches that advance this literature and that might serve as starting points for publishable research papers or a dissertation; and
- master research process skills critical to success in an academic career such as the ability to think clearly and communicate effectively both orally and in written form.
SEMINAR FORMAT AND ASSIGNMENTS

The assignments are designed to help you gain a critical understanding of the readings, to generate new research ideas, and to develop skills needed for a successful academic career. Grades will be calculated based on your performance along the following five components that are explained below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class preparation and participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Article critiques</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion leadership</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper or research project proposal</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review of classmate’s paper</td>
<td>5%</td>
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Class preparation and participation (30%)

This seminar is discussion based and the quality of the learning experience depends greatly on each student’s contributions and students’ interactions during the class sessions. This means that each student must take responsibility for the success of the class by being an active (and constructively critical) participant in all class sessions. A student who sits back and listens (however intently) is likely to detract from others’ learning experience. Preparation before class is essential, and an important part of the evaluation of performance will be based on student preparedness and internalization of concepts as evidenced by in-class discussion. Preparation requires reading the required assigned materials. However, simply reading the materials is not enough – students must also evaluate the material, critique it, analyze how it fits with the literature, etc.

Your class contributions should go well beyond “I liked this reading” and “I didn’t like that one” (although these reactions are important). Try to dig deeper and ask questions like:

- What are the explicit or implicit assumptions of this perspective?
- How realistic are those assumptions?
- Which relevant variables are not considered?
- What are the broader implications of the perspective?
- Do you find these implications believable?
- What relevant questions are not answered?
- What studies should be done to develop theory in the area under discussion?

Article Critiques (15%)

For each session students will be assigned one of the readings to summarize and critique. Each student will prepare a 2 page (single spaced) written report on their assigned paper that has the following format:
Title of reading: Complete title and citation
Summarized by: Student’s name
Purpose of reading: Concise description or main motivation/objective/research question, fit with broader stream of research
Theoretical argument: Summary of theoretical argument, basic assumptions, major propositions
Methodology: Description of research methods (if any) used, including data, statistical analysis
Findings and contributions: Summary of key findings and unique contributions to the field

Critique: Problems, limitations, future extensions

- For a theoretical paper you might consider questions such as: How interesting is the theory? What are the core assumptions behind the theory? How plausible are these assumptions? Can testable hypotheses/propositions be developed based on the argument presented? What future empirical studies can we design to test this theory? What (if any) ideas from different/competing theories are contested by the paper? Can we design a test to distinguish between the competing theories? What (if any) implications does this theory have for the practice of management?

- For an empirical paper you might consider questions such as: How novel and interesting is the theory developed? How much does this paper advance our knowledge about the phenomenon studied? How well this the theory linked to the empirical analysis? How well do the measures capture the author’s theoretical constructs? Are there any endogeneity/omitted variable issues? Do you find the story “believable”? Why or why not? What alternative explanations might drive the findings? How could the paper be improved? What further research questions does this paper suggest to you? What (if any) implications do the findings have for the practice of management?

Students should post their summaries on the course Blackboard site at least 24 hours prior to the class session. Thus, at the end of the semester students will have a complete survey of the readings discussed in class. It is thought that this summary will constitute a valuable study aid as students prepare for their qualifying exams. *Summaries turned in late will receive no credit although they still should be turned in so that they are included in the summary packet.*

**Discussion leadership (15%)**

Most class sessions will be led by one or two students. Each student will be assigned to serve as discussion leader for one or two class sessions. By the second class session, please identify and rank the top five sessions that you would like to lead. The discussion leaders’ task is to:

1. Thoroughly prepare the topic to be discussed that day, and be particularly knowledgeable about it, including both the required readings and optional supplemental readings.

2. Prepare a short (20 minute maximum) presentation of a synthesis and critique that (1) ties the assigned papers together and (2) shows links to other theoretical perspectives that we have discussed in this class or that you have studied in other classes. To tie papers together identify key themes, questions and debates raised in this group of papers. Sometimes a diagram may be
useful to show how the readings relate to or build upon each other. What are the key points of agreement or disagreement? In your presentation, please give the class a brief summary of the key points from the optional supplemental readings – explaining the main issues, ideas, debates, and results, as well as how the optional supplemental readings relate to each other, and to the required readings. (There is no need to summarize the required readings.) Does this theoretical perspective supplement, contradict, or expand on other perspectives?

3. Plan, prepare, and deliver questions and/or activities for class discussion that will lead students to integrate and compare the papers, develop their own mental maps of the literature, and seek out new and “interesting” research opportunities

4. Lead, facilitate, and moderate the discussion in a way that it provides an effective and valuable learning experience for the entire class.

By Thursday before the class that you are scheduled to lead, please send me an e-mail detailing your plan for leading the class discussion. This is an opportunity for you to get feedback and approval for your plan. If you would like to discuss your plan earlier, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Research paper or research project proposal (30%)

You are required to prepare 15 to 30 page manuscript that is either a standalone research paper in itself, or a proposal for a research project that could, if executed, become the basis of a publishable paper or dissertation. This paper should make a contribution to the strategy field.

Format. Your research paper should consist of the following sections:

- An introduction describing the motivation for the study, how your study fits in the existing literature and what the contributions of your study to the literature are.
- A theory section in which you review and critique the existing literature, develop and explain your conceptual argument, present specific testable hypotheses, and discuss their implications and relevance to existing empirical findings.
- A method section that explains a research design that would be appropriate to test your hypotheses or ideas, using data that could realistically be collected and analyzed within a one year time horizon (taking into account the financial constraints, data-access constraints, and time constraints on a typical doctoral student). It is possible that the relevant data might be readily available (e.g., in public databases or in data sets already collected by other researchers), in which case you are strongly encouraged to go ahead and perform the actual data analysis and report the results in the paper, in a separate results section.
- A discussion/conclusion section in which you discuss the implications of your research for theory, empirical research and the practice of management.

I will post more information about the content and format of the research paper on the course Blackboard site.

Schedule. Start thinking about your topic as early in the semester as possible. Please, discuss your initial thoughts with me, so that I can point you towards related work. If your desired topic is covered late in the semester in this class, you may need to “read ahead” in the syllabus to get started. In order to help you structure and pace your work and to give you intermediate feedback, you are required to submit intermediate work-in-progress products as outlined below. The topic of your term project must be approved by your instructor (so do not get too far along in the project before coordinating with me):

1) Term project topic must be approved by me by class meeting #6 via e-mail.

2) Printed outline of the proposed term project, 2 to 3 pages in length is due by class meeting #8, but may be submitted earlier (in order to gain instructor approval and feedback earlier). This
The outline itself will not be graded, but will be used to provide developmental feedback. However, failure to submit an outline by the deadline may result in a reduced grade for the term project.

3) Two printed copies of a rough draft of the term project, including references, are due by session #12. This draft will not be graded but will be used to provide developmental feedback.

4) Single-blind peer reviews of the rough drafts will be exchanged at class meeting #13, at which time you will also receive the instructor’s feedback.

5) Two single-sided printed copies of the completed term project are due by the beginning of the final exam period.

There will be no incomplete grades given for incomplete papers. If you want to further develop and polish your paper, it can be done after the semester you are encouraged to do so after the end of the semester, but this additional work will NOT be graded by using the “incomplete” grade to extend the term project deadline.

Presentation. At the final session (class #14), you will give a 10-minute presentation about your project. The time limit will be strictly enforced, so you should practice to make sure it isn’t too long. In this spirit, you should plan to use no more than 5 slides and don’t cram more material in by talking faster or using smaller fonts. Rather than trying to present your entire term project, you should try to sell the audience on what the project is and make them want to see the full paper. Try to achieve the quality one would hope to see in a research presentation at a major academic conference.

One purpose of this class presentation is to facilitate the generation of constructive feedback, ideas, and suggestions from your classmates about your term project. So, at the end of each presentation, there will be a brief period for the class to ask questions, give comments, and offer suggestions.

Review of a classmate’s paper (10%)

Each student will prepare a single-blind review of the rough draft of another classmate’s paper. Single-blind means that the reviewer will know the identity of the author, but the author will not know who the reviewer is. Most academic journals use a double-blind review process where the author and the reviewer do not know each other’s identity, but this is impractical for our class.

The confidentiality of a blind review process gives the reviewer the freedom to provide frank, direct, and undiluted feedback without fear of negative consequences. Nevertheless, this confidentiality is not a license to be rude, insulting, or inappropriate. Rather, you should keep your criticisms constructive – i.e., focused on specific, concrete changes that could realistically improve the rough draft, taking into account all of the constraints on this term project assignment and on research projects in general. Peer reviews will be graded by the instructor, based on a judgment of: 1) how constructive and useful they are to the author, and 2) how well they identify the obstacles that stand in the way of turning the rough draft into a finished piece of publishable research. The peer review should be about 2 to 3 pages long.

For further advice on how to review a manuscript, please see the Academy of Management Journal’s “Guidelines for Reviewers” web page at: http://aom.org/Publications/AMJ/AMJ-Reviewer-Resources.aspx. You will receive the rough draft to review at class meeting #12. Please submit two printed, stapled copies of your peer review at class meeting #13. The two copies of your review should identify the author and title of the project being reviewed, but they should NOT contain your name or anything else that might identify you as the reviewer. In order to maintain the single-blind nature of the review process, please submit the two copies of your review in the envelope supplied by me.
### Overview of Class Topics and Assignments

(This schedule and the topics are subject to change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Discussion Leader</th>
<th>Assignments/Deadlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9/8/2015</td>
<td>What is Strategic Management Research About?</td>
<td>Petra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9/14/2015</td>
<td>Conducting Research in the Field of Strategic Management</td>
<td>Petra</td>
<td>Written Assignment (See BB) Identify your preferences (top 5) for which sessions to lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9/21/2015</td>
<td>The Industrial Organization Approach</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Article critique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9/28/2015</td>
<td>Industry Dynamics</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Article critique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10/5/2015</td>
<td>The Resource-based View of the Firm</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Article critique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(need to change date)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10/12/2015</td>
<td>Extensions of the Resource-Based View</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Article critique Submit research paper topic for approval (via e-mail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10/19/2015</td>
<td>Competitive Dynamics</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Article critique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10/26/2015</td>
<td>People and Processes in Strategy Research</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Article critique Initial outline for research paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11/9/2015</td>
<td>Corporate Strategy: Diversification</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Article critique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11/16/2015</td>
<td>Strategy and Theories of the Firm</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Article critique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>11/23/2015</td>
<td>Mergers &amp; Acquisitions Strategic Alliances</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Article critique Draft of student papers (2 copies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>11/30/2015</td>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility and Competitive Advantage</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Article critique Peer reviews of research papers due before class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>12/7/2015</td>
<td>Presentation of Student Research Papers</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Presentation of your research paper Final papers due 12/16/2015</td>
</tr>
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Reading List
(Note: Readings may be added or deleted during the semester)

Readings for Session 1

Topic: What is Strategic Management Research About?

Readings:

Readings for Session 2

Topic: Conducting Research in Strategic Management

Today’ reading address two important topic one should consider when conducting research in the field of strategic management (and in other fields as well): 1. What is the role of theory in advancing the knowledge in the field of strategic management, and 2. What makes strategic management research interesting.

Readings:


**Readings for Session 3**

**Topic: The Industrial Organization Approach**

**Readings:**

**The S-C-P Paradigm**


**The Strategic Groups Debate**


**Readings for Session 4**

**Topic: Industry Dynamics**

**Readings:**

**Market Entry**


**Industry Evolution**


**Temporary Advantage**

Readings for Session 5

Topic: Internal Determinants of Competitive Advantage: The Resource-Based View of the Firm

Readings:
Resource Based Theory


Empirical Studies of the resource-based view (please read one of these two articles)


Readings for Session 6

Topic: Extensions of the Resource-Based View of the Firm

Readings:

Hazards on the Road to a Resource-Based Advantage

**Evolutionary Economics and Dynamic Capabilities**

**Foundational Articles:**


**Empirical Research on Dynamic Capabilities:** (Please read one of these articles)

**Future Research Directions**

**Readings for Session 7**

**Topic:** Competitive Dynamics

**Discussion of Research Paper Ideas**

**Readings:**
Multimarket Contact and Competitive Dynamics


**Game Theoretic Modeling**


**Readings for Session 8**

**Topic: Processes and People in Strategy Research**

**Readings:**

Origins of the content / process divide


The emergent vs. deliberate debate


The resource allocation process school of thought


Cognitive, and political influences on strategic decision making


The process of process research


The Upper Echelons Perspective (please read one of the three required/optional articles)


Readings for Session 9

Topics: The Locus of Firm Performance

Measurement Issues in Strategy Research

Readings:

**The Locus of Firm Performance**


**Measurement Issues in Strategy Research**


**Readings for Session 10**

**Topic:** Corporate Strategy – Diversification

**Readings:**


**Readings for Session 11**

**Topic: Strategy and the Theory of the Firm**

**Readings:**

**Organization Form and Boundaries of the Firm**


**Agency Theory**

Readings for Session 12

Topics: Corporate Strategy – Mergers, Acquisitions and Strategic Alliances, The Review Process

Mergers & Acquisitions

Alliances

The Review Process
Read the AMJ Guidelines for reviewers at: http://journals.aomonline.org/amj/reviewer_guidelines.html


Original Submission and All Revisions
Comments by Editor and Reviewers on All Versions
All Responses to Editor and Reviewers

Readings for Session 13

Topic: A Strategic View of Corporate Social Responsibility

Readings:

Overview

Stakeholder theory

The corporate social performance – competitiveness link
Firm self regulation and certifiable standards